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the tower ^{cs}_{fa}

Number 6

April 24, 1959

Jazz Concert Today

featuring DOUG SKINNER and friends



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**FRIDAY
NIGHT
MAY 1ST**

your chance
to retreat
from the
frightful '50s
to the
roarin' '20s

GO TO
THE
ROARIN' '20s

MIKE FENDER ^{INDEPENDENT}
_{IS THE}

RUSSIAN HILL GALLERY
PAINTINGS BY JOHN DUNLOP
APRIL 7 - MAY 2 → 1410 VELLEJO STREET

PERAMBULATIONS DOWN THE GARDEN PATH
(Based on Mr. Fred Martin's "Two Sections" April 15)

Who among us has not been exposed to, indeed accepted as a general formulation, the view of the history and growth of art as that vast pyramid the apex of which builds upon itself, constantly populated by the geniuses of the moment? There, one can easily envision those, whom Mr. Martin suggests, "have stood upon the shoulders of their fathers and have ground their heels into their faces" uttering Olympian cries of surpassal. The supposition that such a view of the lineage of art influences is an accurate one needs to be questioned before one can determine what is happening in that zenith confusion of acrobatics.

To set aside for the moment questions of necromancy (the Merlins of this day, Mr. Gallup and Time magazine among them, have proven too often the inaccuracies of their powers) and spurious concepts of time -- Mr. Martin's definition quite suffices in this case -- one might better begin with what has and is happening. We are surrounded by irrefutable evidence that something has happened. How else can one explain the function of the museum? The late Mr. Wright aptly likened it to that of a morgue. It seems equally evident that something is happening in art now as well. What that something may be is another question altogether.

But day by day painters paint, sculptors sculpt and "artists" do whatever they find necessary. All too frequently (or not frequently enough, whatever one's vested interest and view may be) the products of these labors find themselves hung in testimony of their creators. And, as each new testimonial is hung in morgue after morgue, the ever present question arises from the posses of critics and viewers that thunder past -- "Which way did he go now, boys?"

Surely the task of separating among all this the innovators from the followers, the goats from the sheep, the imaginary toads from the real ones, is a prodigious one. Relativity has come hand in hand with "modern art" into the realms of art criticism. Witness our local Messers A.F. Mr. A.F.#1, whose frank admissions of bias and ignorance provide for his audience one relative frame of references; and our Mr. A.F.#2, master of ambiguity, whose references are neither here nor there.

The viewer, lead in a very real sense down the garden path of "modern art" is more likely to discover himself in a kind of Rheinhardtian¹ chaparral. Can this be the apex of the pyramid? One views, instead, a thicket of truncated, perennially pruned and grafted growths. How can each bush and limb have surpassed itself?

Not "What is the incomprehensible of today?" but "Which incomprehensible do we choose to define today?" seems to be the question.

Indeed, if the painter has nothing else he does at least have to assume the responsibility of his own conceptions and judgments -- and, it is all his own fault.

W. Morehouse

¹ See Ad Rheinhardt's "The Tree of Art"

AT THE CELLAR PAINTINGS
BY
BING HEDRICK BROWNS WILLIAMS

An Open Letter Inquiring into the article titled
"Two Sections" in the April 15th edition
of Tower

Dear Fred,

A few small points remain a bit obscure on a second reading of your,
y, should I say, manifesto.

First, an examination of the year 1836 immediately brings to question whether you refer to the appointment of the Earl of Auckland as Governor General of India; the birth of Anne Besant's husband, Sir Walter; or the passage of the first law regarding the hire of Hackney coaches in London.

Second, in making the statement that the geniuses of the subsequent years "have stood upon the shoulders of their fathers and have ground their heels into their faces as they shout, 'see, we have surpassed you'." do you allude to the well known paragraph in Gertrude Stein's "The Making of Americans"; and if so, is it not fair to say that you have done more than a little to alter the teleological intent of her profoundly moving vignette? As I remember the story it goes more like this: A young man is seen driving a team of horses through an orchard. Lashed from the plow beam, drabbling in the fresh turned earth, torn and bleeding, is a very old man. Suddenly, the silence is broken by the old man's cries: "Halt, halt; I did not drag MY father beyond this tree !

I mention this teleology business because the subtitles that follow your story are seemingly consumed by this lively speculation.¹ Moreover, if we look beyond teleology in the restricted sense of far, end, complete (tele, teleo, teles, teleos,) and contemplate rather the theory of self determined forces moving toward certain actualities (like Bergson toward the Church, or Rimbaud toward endless vistas of innocence) then I presume we are doing your exposition justice, though Henri might get a touch of the shrink and Arthur small pleasure from it.

Third, though the second section commences with a most admirable quotation followed by an equally laudable parenthetical critique (and let no one think I say this because of its brevity), the coda is most perplexing - not to say plain bad. For what is indicated by our experience, and by the authors of paradox₂ is precisely the opposite observation, namely: If man has nothing else, he at least has: that IT is NOT his fault.

In the bowels of Christian charity
your purveyor of locks and fixtures,

Art Boericke

- 1 Though reminiscent also of Hamlet's discourse with Polonius: "...yonder cloud that's almost in the shape of a camel?" Etc. "Very like a whale."
- 2 From Zenn to Kafka: PARADOX, fr. paradoxos, Gk., contrary to received opinion. Opinion not experience.

a poem

though voices bring a stillness

not known,
noices fall like morning birds.

Urgently
leaving from stones

from stone to stone

their movement.

And there be no tombs.
and there be no tombs

upon the banks of heavy forests; no,
but ending all nothing more than laughter. . . .
after all
make nothing more than laughter
for there is nothing more beautiful (whatever??).

T. H.